

Advanced Online Marketing

Integrating banner advertising with blogs & editorial, social networking, and search engine optimization

by Matthew Skallerud

Now I could start here by simply outlining how to reach gay people on Facebook, MySpace, Blogs or even banner advertising, but I won't. Rather, I would like to illustrate how all of these components can now fit together into one complete online marketing solution, using some of the most advanced concepts in online marketing today and designed to maximize a campaign's online reach, its effectiveness and its bottom line.

In summary, your starting point becomes a "story to tell" (we define this as EDITORIAL) about your organization, product or service. The most common stories to tell are either educational or entertaining in nature. Examples of editorial are endless... if you're a destination, you could blog about local restaurants that have just opened, local events happening in your area, etc. If you are a wedding planner, doing stories about wedding tips and resources, as well as current news & topics related to your genre of weddings or weddings in your area would be perfect. If you're an online dating company, doing stories related to "how to meet your perfect match online" would be great (educational) as well as perhaps doing a photo and editorial coverage of someone's first date... especially of two people who met through your site!

You then take that editorial, break it up into bite-size pieces, and integrate it online through a blog you develop just for marketing your company. You also try your best to get those blog entries included in

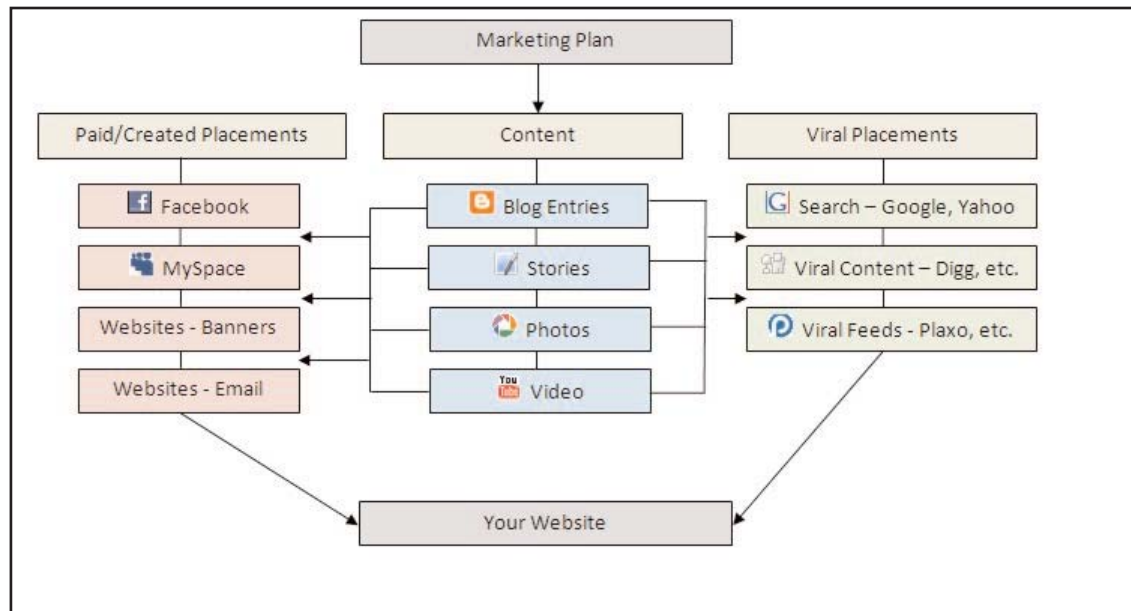
other, like-minded blogs as well. This happens by first starting your blog, and then working individually with each blog you want to have a closer working relationship with, making outreach to them and beginning the process of cross-promotion through either links or even using each other's blog entries on a case-by-case basis (normally you wouldn't use their entire blog entry, but rather you would summarize it and link directly to their blog entry). This process would be spread out over the course of the year, to keep your editorial current and fresh in the public's eye. You should also adapt this editorial to become its own standalone story, for use on content- and community-based websites. Of course, with all components of this editorial, full links back to your website are a must.

Using some of the latest viral features found online, including *Digg.com* and *Plaxo.com*, as well as social networking features found on *Facebook*

and *MySpace*, you're able to distribute this editorial far and wide on the Internet. The more this editorial is distributed, the higher your website's search engine ranking becomes since each story and blog entry has a direct link to your website. You would also be encouraged to post this story on your own website as well as link to the blog and the Facebook and MySpace pages you have created.

As part of this overall marketing effort, we would also encourage the use of photos and perhaps video, to increase the overall viral nature of this campaign and to maximize its effectiveness in the social networking space.

Any banner ad or e-mail campaign you do should then include this editorial as part of the advertising package, and you should focus on website partners with strong search engine positioning for the search term key word phrases that best match your organization. So consider it **Banner Advertising PLUS!**



At first you may be thinking this sounds ludicrous, but it's not. With more established print publications, this may be a difficult request for them to handle, but in the online world, you are spending the money here and this editorial, normally in the story format, is integral to your advertising campaign. Without it and you're missing out on a very key component of your campaign's success online. One of the lasting benefits of this type of online marketing campaign is the "long tail" feature of your editorial

online. Long after this campaign has concluded, the editorial, with the logos, banners and links to your website, continue on with their search engine positioning, continuing to drive traffic to your website for years to come.

Components

Facebook

Facebook Group

The best place to start on Facebook is by creating a group. A group is an entity that members of the social networking site can join. An owner of a group can post pictures, information, videos, events and send mass communication to all members of the group.

- Showcase lots of your organization's photos
- Take videos highlighting your organization to upload

- Encourage / seek out users to upload photos and videos
- Post a lot of items
 - Events (see 'Facebook Events' section)
 - YouTube videos highlighting your organization or of similar theme
 - News Articles
 - Stories / Blogs
- Encourage discussions on the discussion board
- Increase membership to the group
 - Post things regularly to appear in member feeds
 - Make the group dynamic enough to have members post to their profile / become engaged
- The group will be the focal point of the GLBT facet of your organization on Facebook

Facebook Fan Page

A fan page is a good way for businesses to post information about their organization and allow users to become "Fans" of the organization. It is very much like a limited group. The point of having a fan page would be to just serve as another outlet people could tap into, become fans of and increase your organizations' visibility. Content would be updated mainly in the group and some would trickle over to the fan page. It is also easy to integrate a blog into the Fan Page (see 'Blog' section)

Facebook Events

Events are essential ways to let people know what's going on with your organization. Every time an event is on the horizon, post it on Facebook, show photos and videos from previous years and attach it to your Fan Page and Group. Then, people can choose whether or not they are going to attend the event.

- Invite people in a steady stream to increase visibility on people's feeds
- Send updates about the event so the people who are attending are consistently reminded of it and will be more enthusiastic about inviting friends
- Create a dynamic page with photos and videos to incite excitement for the event

MySpace

If you already have a business MySpace page in place (many organizations do), use the above information related to Facebook to keep this content updated on MySpace as well. If not, create a business MySpace page and have at it.

Blogs

A blog is an important way to get lots of information out to consumers about your product or service. A consistently updated, interesting blog will appear in web searches, could be viewed by a large number of people and will serve as a very beneficial tool for the destination. Blogs are quickly becoming replacements to guide books and more stale information found online.

The blog should consist of both original content as well as content (editorial, photos and videos) found online related to your organization. You should have someone dedicated to this, part-time, to keep this blog up-to-date. There should be a variety of different segments to entice readers. For instance, using Palm Springs as an example, having a segment every other Wednesday highlighting a new restaurant in Palm Springs will show one side of the destination and people into cuisine will quickly learn to tune in every other Wednesday. The same can be done for nightlife, attractions, etc. Thinking outside of the box is a huge asset here. Some of these ways could be interviewing a new Palm Springs resident a week to provide some local flavor, finding tourists once a week who can give an account of their trip and doing very uniquely Palm Springs things consistently will give a broad-view of the destination.

The goal is to provide rich, dynamic and interesting information. This blog should make people excited about your organization, it should teach them something new, it should be something they want to share with friends and it should really make them think about your organization when they're not reading the blog.

The blog will normally, by default, include an RSS feed which can be utilized in a third party site. It can then be fed into Facebook's Fan Page, links will be posted to the Group, and the code can be utilized on a number of different sites including MySpace. People will also be able to elect to receive blog e-mail updates and download it to their RSS readers like Microsoft Outlook so they are constantly updated. That, along with the Google searches, will paste this blog all over the Internet and become the premiere place of GLBT information for your organization. Lastly, be sure to [ping your blog](#) using Technorati.com

Story

Elements of this constantly updated blog should be adapted into a story about your organization. Each story written should have a different focus (i.e., gay friendly restaurants in Palm Springs, gay walking tour of Palm Springs, etc.). These stories can then be posted online through a variety of sources (including Digg.com, Newsvine.com and others) and can be utilized as part of any banner ad or e-mail campaign your organization undertakes.

Photos

As part of the local editorial process for obtaining good blog content, you should also hire local photographers to submit event photos for inclusion online. The photos would be primarily group shots of individuals, whereby these photos could then be posted online in either Picasa or Flickr or any other social photo website, and then included as part of the blog. You should also utilize these photos for use on the Facebook Group, tagging the photos to increase their overall viral nature.

Videos

Additionally, you could also find local individuals who can shoot and edit video for your organization, posting this video on Facebook, MySpace and YouTube. Using YouTube, you could then develop a special YouTube Channel dedicated to your organization.

The video would not be a high-quality video production, but rather, it would be shot in "blog" format, creating snippets of video content less than 10 minutes in length which can be utilized best in an online format.

In summarizing this **Advanced Online Advertising** section, it's important to understand the big picture... you are starting with content in a variety of formats (snippets of content in the form of blogs, longer form content in the form of stories, photographs and video) and utilizing that content to put your organization, product or service in front of where your customer's eyeballs are continually migrating to online. Such a campaign puts you in front of those eyeballs by providing your organization top-level exposure in:

- Search engines such as Google (*for those not sure which sites to start with*)
- Community and content-based websites (*for those who do know where they like to start*)
- Blogs (*for those who employ a variety of methods to stay up-to-the-minute and current on their favorite topics*)
- Social Networking sites such as Facebook (*for those who are staying current with their friends and the companies, products and services that are of specific interest to them*)
- Video sites such as YouTube (*for those who enjoy personal, shorter form video entertainment*)